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Organization and Planning of Counterpreparation

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Counterpreparation and War Experience

Counterpreparation in the hands of the army and corps commanders is the most effective method of achieving a powerful fire concentration against the enemy during the defence. The special tasks of counterpreparation are to disrupt the enemy's assault preparations and to inflict on him heavy losses in men and equipment.

Artillery, airforce, mortars, as well as rifle and machine gun fire participate in the counter preparation. Field Service Regulations also envisage the use of tanks.

Targets for counterpreparation should be: main groupings of enemy tanks and infantry, preparing for the move forward or being assembled into departure positions; the forward line of observation posts; supply depots; headquarters, signal centers, and artillery fire positions. On the main targets of counterpreparation, assemblies of enemy infantry and tanks, the main fire effort of defence should be concentrated. During the period of the counterpreparation enemy artillery fire should be suppressed.

The field service regulations of all armies, including ours, do not envisage the necessity of delivering massed artillery fire on the forward line of the enemy's observation points and on his artillery positions during the period of the counterpreparation. But the experience of the Orsk Belgorod action demonstrated that the employment of massed artillery fire during the counterpreparatory period has a significant effect not only on disorganizing the enemy but also to reduce markedly the effect of his fire on our troops during the period of his preparatory fire.

Unexpected massed fire on the forward observation posts of the enemy in the sector of his planned breakthrough can seriously reduce his independence of action. To allow such a possibility to escape is not permissible.

In the period of the war the Red Army made extensive use of mortars and to these added a new powerful anti-personnel weapon -

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the rocket launchers. The addition of the rocket launchers as the main anti-personnel weapon gave the ~~artillery~~ the freedom to concentrate on counter battery operations.

To set as the main task of the counterpreparation the destruction of the enemy's fire positions is not correct, since it is possible, having made such a decision, to spend a large amount of ammunition on empty targets, since the attacked artillery positions would probably have been changed prior to an attack. Also, to disregard, in the counterpreparation, the infantry and tanks which the enemy is assembling, even at the expense of diverting artillery fire will have a serious effect on the attack.

When the defender has at his disposal enough artillery and aircraft, and has the capability to utilize part of his available force against enemy artillery without weakening his strikes against enemy ~~artillery~~ infantry and tanks, his capability to disorganize the enemy's attack, even to disrupt it, is high.

The experience of the counterpreparation carried out on the 5th of July in the ⁰⁷²⁶ ~~0726~~ -Belgorod operation will demonstrate the necessity of utilizing artillery, mortars, rocket launchers, airforce, the fire of tanks as well as small arms fire (rifle and machine gun) of infantry units during the counterpreparation.

The Utilization of the Various Arms during the Counter- Preparation.

Artillery: Artillery plays a leading role in the counterpreparation. The massed fire of artillery is the decisive force in delivering heavy losses on enemy infantry and tanks which are stationed in the departure positions or in the concentration areas.

Artillery power is not to be dispersed. It is essential that it be used on main targets: - personnel, tanks, artillery and enemy observation positions.

In order to inflict heavy casualties on the enemy, air attacks with fire bombs should be conducted, while in the infantry positions

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all types of artillery would be effective but only 122 mm and 152 mm calibre fire should be used against tank concentration.

For the suppression of well-constructed (from the engineer point of view) observation points, the most economical means are groups of 10-12 direct fire guns.

The utilization of direct fire guns during the counterpreparatory period should be confined to suitable targets. The selection of the right moment for such an attack will always depend on the actual situation. In this connection it is desirable that the attacked observation posts be subjected to massed fire by all calibres.

For strikes against supply depots, headquarters, signal centers, the fire of no less than a battalion should be used. The most effective gun for that purpose is the 107 mm and howitzers of 122 mm calibre, or higher.

The artillery tasks during the period of the counterpreparation should be conducted in short, powerful strikes.

Prior to the war it was accepted that the artillery should conduct its counterpreparation from temporary positions. Among other things, war experience has shown that the artillery was frequently subjected to air raids while it changed from its temporary to its permanent positions. When this occurred, the artillery did not only suffer losses in men and material, but was also prevented from fulfilling the task which had been assigned to it during the attack by the enemy's infantry and tanks.

It follows from this that the artillery should conduct its counterpreparation from its basic position in order that it is in constant readiness should the enemy attempt an attack immediately following the counterpreparation.

Mortars of all calibres are a powerful means to deliver fire against the enemy's infantry departure positions, be they disposed in trenches or on reverse slopes.

Massed mortar fire will inflict heavy casualties and will assist in the disruption of the enemy's attack. The 120 mm mortar can also

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be used for the destruction of hostile observation posts in the forward areas.

If the enemy has built a system of trenches impregnable to fire which he intends to use as a departure position, mortars down to 50 mm calibre should be used.

The mortars of the first echelon Rifle regiments should fully participate in the counterpreparation. If the army has regimental brigades of 120 mm mortars, it is absolutely necessary to employ these during the counterpreparation in the expected direction of the enemy's main thrust. The commanders of the mortar subunits should carefully reconnoitre all the possible locations in their sectors which might be suitable for the assembly of enemy infantry. These locations should be zeroed in so that fire could be directed against them at any time of the night or day.

The Rocket Launchers during the patriotic war, proved themselves a powerful anti-personnel weapon.

Rocket launcher units are particularly suitable to deliver fire against enemy personnel, on the main sectors of the counterpreparation as well as on the probable enemy infantry concentration areas.

Each Rocket Launcher Regiment should be assigned several sectors in which it is to destroy enemy personnel. This allotment of targets should be made sufficiently early in order that the most suitable fire positions can be selected in time to allow for a careful reconnaissance of the roads leading up to them, that the time required to move from the camping area to the individual fire positions can be measured exactly.

The fire of the rocket launchers will be planned at army headquarters. The centralized employment of the rocket launcher units permits the massing of their fire in the most important sector as well as switching the fire as a change in the situation might demand.

All the practical preparatory planning concerning rocket launcher units will be done by the command of the army groups, accord-

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ing to the army plan for the counterpreparation.

Airforce. Bomber and ground attack aircraft play an important role in the counterpreparation. The Air Force has the capability to attack the tank and infantry concentration areas, supply depots, headquarters and artillery dispositions (firing positions, as well as the areas of the observation points), with ground attack aircraft and bombers.

There are two ~~of~~ more or less typical methods of employing the air forces in the counterpreparation. The first is when the air force by air strikes, supplements the fire of the artillery and mortars. The second is when each is given separate targets with which they are to deal separately.

The first method is usually employed when the counterpreparation covers a relatively narrow sector. The second, when the counterpreparation has to be conducted in a large area.

When considering participation of aircraft in a counterpreparation it has to be borne in mind that the most suitable height for the bombers' flights (600 to 1500 meters) lies within one of the artillery trajectories. This requires that our artillery fire be stopped during the approach flight and the bombing by the aircraft in the respective sectors.

When artillery fire and air bombardment are alternated during the counterpreparation the sequence might be as follows: 5 minutes of artillery fire, 10 minutes of aerial bombardment, 5 to 6 minutes of artillery and mortar fire, 10 minutes of aerial bombardment.

When artillery and aircraft are used in joint action on a broad front, and the airfields are 20 to 30 minutes away from the targets, a 30 to 40 minute fire preparation will allow only one bombing run. Therefore, from the beginning of joint counterpreparation it is proper to utilize aircraft for the systematic suppression of the enemy along the army (or corps) front by bombing flights of individual aircraft and the creation of fires.

The importance of aircraft in counterpreparation increases in

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the event that the enemy does not have sufficient artillery and mortars.

The best combination of ground fire weapons and air will depend on the available artillery, mortars and rocket launchers as well as on the ground attack and bomber aircraft.

Utilization of aircraft will also depend on the current situation. A realistic evaluation of the existing conditions will show which of the possible combinations should be employed.

Tanks. In the defence situations will occur in which it would be suitable to employ tanks in the counterpreparation. Thus, on the 5th of July, 1943, tank fire against the enemy was utilized in the counterpreparation of the 6th. Guards Army in the direction of Belgorod.

Tanks, utilizing incendiary fragmentation shells can inflict heavy casualties on enemy personnel in the forward areas. Participation of tanks in the counterpreparation requires good preparatory planning and organization on the part of the tank command, headquarters, commanders of individual tanks, and personnel.

Assigning to a tank regiment or brigade any expedient sector: this will give the opportunity to see clearly the result of the fire delivered by tank units or subunits; as well as strengthening the timely organization of the fire.

The inclusion of tanks in the counterpreparation will always make the primary tasks of the tank units more difficult. If the inclusion of tanks makes the fulfillment of the tasks which had been assigned to them in the general plan more difficult, then they should not be used.

In heavily wooded and broken country it is difficult to use tank fire. The most favorable conditions for the use of tank fire in the counterpreparation exist in the steppe or in slightly rolling country.

Infantry Rifle and Machine Gun Fire. An important role in the counterpreparation is played by infantry, rifle, and machine gun fire. In the period of the sudden fire attack of all the available

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weapons of the defenders, infantry, rifle (single shot and automatic) and machine gun fire should be directed against enemy personnel emplacements. The unexpected rifle and machine gun fire will inflict heavy casualties on the enemy.

Rifle and machine gun fire will also pin down enemy infantry at the moment of the artillery concentration and thereby increase casualties.

Subunit commanders should organize their rifle and machine gun fire in such a manner that it falls exactly on the line of the enemy targets.

A fire attack by all the weapons of the defence coordinated as to time and place is the decisive means for inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy and the disruption of his attack.

The Planning of the Counterpreparation

In order to be able to plan correctly a counterpreparation, it is first of all necessary to conduct a careful reconnaissance of the enemy's position and to locate his closest positions. It is also necessary to familiarize oneself with the terrain in order to be able to assess possible routes of attack. Only a careful review of the data secured through a careful reconnaissance makes a realistic plan for a counterpreparation possible.

Counterpreparation will be planned by the army and formation commanders. A more or less complete counterpreparation can be planned and executed at army level.

Prior to the planning of a counterpreparation the army commander should study the situation carefully and then from a study of the map make an appreciation of the most likely sectors in which the enemy might attack.

After he has decided on these sectors it is necessary to conduct a careful reconnaissance of these. The reconnaissance of the sectors of the counterpreparation is conducted personally by the army

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commander, the army artillery commander, the chiefs of the various arms and the army staff officers. The reconnaissance will establish:

- the likely areas of departure of the hostile infantry prior to the attack and the boundaries of the attack.
- the forward line of enemy observation points from which our forward line and the nearby depth of our forward defence can be observed.
- the likely areas of concentration of enemy artillery.
- the likely departure positions for tanks and the routes they might use to move forward.
- what type of fire could be the most suitable to use against each sector of the counterpreparation (artillery, mortars, rocket launchers, or aircraft).

The results of the reconnaissance should be marked on a map. After the reconnaissance has been completed the artillery commander must submit to the army commander a plan of employment of the artillery, mortars, and rocket launchers on each sector of the front where the enemy is likely to attack. The submission must include:

- a summary of the strength of the artillery, mortars and rocket launcher regiments on the sector of the counterpreparation.
- how many and of what type of artillery from neighboring sectors it is necessary to ask for.
- the targets for artillery, mortars and rocket launcher regiments on the sector of the counterpreparation.
- an estimate of the time requirement for the counterpreparation based on the capabilities of the available means of fire.
- an estimate of the required ammunition.
- the utilization of the artillery division (if it is included in the establishment of the army), the mortar regiments of the reserve of the high command, of the army gun regiments as well as the rocket launcher regiments.

It is absolutely necessary to take into consideration the fire from neighboring units in order to achieve a sufficiently heavy fire.

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concentration which can achieve the destruction of the enemy attack.

As the result of the personal reconnaissance and the memoranda submitted to him, the army commander will give to his chief of staff and the artillery commander instructions concerning the plan of the counterpreparation, in one or the other variation, according to the estimate of the probable line of attack by the enemy.

The Chief of Staff of the army, together with the commander and chief of staff of the artillery, with the commander of the rocket launcher formations, as well as with the commanders (chiefs of staff) of the air formations placed under command of the army, will prepare a plan for the counterpreparation according to the agreed variations.

At the army level the plan for the counterpreparation can be worked out graphically (see appendix 1 and sketch 5) (Sketch 5, a map, not included in the translation; can be found on page 55 of the original.)

The plan of the counterpreparation is a part of the general defensive plan. It gives, at army level, the possibility of independent action for the different arms in the period of the counterpreparation.

The plan for the counterpreparation should be brought up to date as the result of information received from reconnaissance.

The tasks of the artillery, mortar regiments, mortar brigades, and rocket launcher regiments taking part in the counterpreparation planned by the army, will be detailed by the army artillery commander in whose plan each artillery and mortar unit will be given a particular task and the amount of ammunition which will be required for the fulfillment of the task will be specified.

The number of concentrations which can be delivered on each target and the extent of the counterpreparation will be limited by the amount of ammunition which can be released for this purpose. The extent of the counterpreparation will also be determined by the number of available artillery mortars, and aircraft. As is proper,

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the participation of the airforce in the counterpreparation will always be large.

The Organization of Cooperation between the Various Arms

During the Counterpreparation

The cooperation between the various arms during a counterpreparation consists of the timely fulfillment of all of the tasks assigned to each arm.

For illustration of this cooperation it is worthwhile to go to a concrete example. According to the army commander the following plan for the counterpreparation had been accepted.

Fire concentrations by the artillery, mortars, rocket launchers, rifle and machine guns - there were to be three; air strikes - there were to be two. During the period of counterpreparation the direct fire weapons were to destroy the observation points - the length of each concentration was to be five minutes.

Between the first and second artillery concentration an air strike was to take place.

Between the second and third artillery concentration the group of direct fire weapons together with rifles and machine guns of the infantry and the mortars will destroy the observation points of the enemy.

In the same period bomber aircraft will strike at the enemy's artillery and by that support the fire of the direct fire weapons in the completion of their tasks. After this follows the third fire concentration.

This program for a counterpreparation providing for 30 minutes of fire and the expenditure of 0.5 units of fire is shown graphically in Table 1.

Table 1.

5 minutes	First concentration by artillery, mortars, rocket launchers and infantry rifle - machine gun fire.
10 minutes	Strike by bombers on ground attack aircraft.

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5 minutes	Second concentration by artillery, mortars, and rocket launcher units.	
5 minutes	Concentration by rifle and machine guns and direct fire weapons. The fire of the direct fire weapons directed against the enemy observation posts. Air strikes at enemy artillery and concentration by the gun artillery regiments.	
5 minutes	The third concentration by the artillery, mortars, and rocket launcher units.	

The army staff and the commanders of the air formations must work out the exact time which the aircraft need to fly from the airfields to the targets, the time required to complete the bombardment of the targets. An accurate calculation of these time requirements makes exact coordination of the fire by ground troops and air forces possible.

When it is necessary to indicate the targets of bombardment for the airforce, the commander of the air formation will discuss with the artillery commander means of indicating the target.

While planning for cooperation during the counterpreparation it is necessary to provide for the eventuality that atmospheric conditions might prevent the air force from fulfilling its assigned tasks. To provide for such a development, a plan as to the type of artillery fire used in such an eventuality will have to be prepared. Should, in the interval, between the second and third concentration, the artillery conduct methodical fire, or should it make a pause, and then continue with the planned counterpreparation?

In the planning auxiliary targets should be assigned to the airforce in addition to the main ones. Another variation is possible, when a strike by all the ground weapons would be delivered simultaneously with the air strike. Under these circumstances hidden targets as well as targets in the depth of the area of the counterpreparation (enemy artillery and tanks) will be assigned to the air force.

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Finally, the situation might be such that it would be advantageous to deliver a massed air attack towards the end of the counterpreparation when the artillery, mortars and rocket launchers have completed their tasks.

The method of counterpreparation and the organization of the cooperation between the various arms will depend on the operational situation and on the number of available artillery, airforce, and ammunition.

Conditions determining the Start of a Counterpreparation

To achieve the aim of a counterpreparation - to destroy the enemy attack or at least to disrupt his preparation for an attack - depends on one of the most important elements of success - the determination of the timing of the start of the counterpreparation.

In order to determine the timely start of the counterpreparation it is absolutely essential to conduct a systematically organized reconnaissance of the forces and by their grouping, by the disposition of the reserves, by the proximity of large tank and air forces, as well as by the movement of supplies, to estimate the enemy's intention.

In this connection it is interesting to study the experience of the Central and Voronezh fronts in the July defensive operations.

On the Central front, from the 2nd. of July, 1943, activity and re-grouping by the enemy was observed. Finally he began to move new infantry and tank units into the forward areas, and, in particular, he had moved the 4th. Infantry Division and the 3rd. Tank Division into position opposite the sector of our 13th. Army by the 5th. of July.

At the same time, opposite the 13th. Army the following were identified: 90 artillery batteries, 22 mortar batteries, and a large number of observation posts. Other sources also reported evidence of preparations for an attack in the near future in the sector of the 13th. Front.

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In connection with the momentarily expected attack the Front Artillery Commander issued the following order towards the end of June. All artillery commanders, from divisional artillery commanders and lower were to remain constantly at their observation posts, to establish round-the-clock observation of the enemy by responsible officers, to conduct conscientious and uninterrupted observation in order to gather new information about the enemy situation.

Only the exact date of the enemy attack remained to be established. An indication of the beginning of an attack by the Germans was given by the lifting of minefields in certain sectors of the Front (This occurred on the 4th. of July). At 2200 hours of the same day a field sapper was taken prisoner who stated that the enemy would start the attack at 0230 hours on the 5th. of July.

This information made it possible to decide on the timing of the artillery counterpreparation which, according to the order of the Front Commander, was to start at 0220 hours on the 5th. of July.

On the Voronezh Front, in the sector of the 6th. Guards Army, special preparations by the enemy had been noted from the 28th. of June, 1943. Reinforcements for the forward elements were observed being moved up along the road Belgorod - Tomarovka and at the same time enemy troops were moving closer to our forward line. Reconnaissance revealed the arrival of four tank and three infantry divisions being moved in from other sectors into the area of the 6th. Guards Army.

A prisoner taken on the 2nd. of July stated that large shipments had been unloaded in the Belgorod area consisting of a large number of artillery, tanks, infantry, ammunition, and provisions.

A deserter of the 2nd. Squadron of the 248 Reconnaissance Detachment of the 168 (German) Infantry Division who had come over to us on the night 3rd. to 4th. of July stated that the Germans were planning to start the attack in the night 4th. to 5th. of July from an area north and north-west of Belgorod and that in preparation for the attack the sappers of the SS Division "Deathhead" were to

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clear the minefields during the night of the 4th. of July.

Thus, on the front of the 6th. and 7th. Guards Armies the following evidence to start a counterattack had become available:

- Information confirmed by all types of reconnaissance of enemy preparation for an attack.
- the concentration of large tank and infantry forces opposite these two armies.
- enemy battle reconnaissance probing for our forward defended line and our outposts during the 4th. of July.
- statements by prisoners that the enemy was planning an attack in the morning of the 5th. of July.

As a result the decision was made to start the counterpreparation at 2230 hours on the 4th. of July.

These two examples show how collation of evidence and a careful analysis of the information gained through reconnaissance can assist the commander of an all arms force to decide on the right moment to start the counterpreparation.

It may also occur that the enemy may anticipate our counterpreparation and oppose it actively. Should this occur, even if it was difficult, it is essential that the planned counterpreparation be completed in order to impose as much damage as possible on the enemy personnel and equipment while these are in the departure positions. In these circumstances the counterpreparation will be merged with the overall defence plan in the effort to repulse the enemy offensive.

We will now quote several examples of counterpreparation from the experience of the Orel-Belgorod operation of the Central and Voronezh Fronts in July, 1943. It has to be noted that the available material only allows the discussion of the role of artillery in the counterpreparation.

Counterpreparation in the Orel-Belgorod Operation

In the Orel-Belgorod Operation, in order to disrupt the advancing enemy, and in order to inflict heavy losses on his personnel and

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equipment, it was decided to conduct a counterpreparation on the 5th. of July as follows: in the Central Front in the sector of the 13th. Army, and on the Voronezh Front in the sectors of the 6th. and 7th. Guards Armies. Conditions made careful planning of the counterpreparation possible on both fronts.

Central Front. The following units were assigned to the counterpreparation of the 13th. Army: 4 divisional artillery regiments, 2 army mortar regiments, 6 mortar regiments from the 4th. Break-through Artillery Corps of the GHQ. reserve, 6 howitzer regiments, 4 gun artillery regiments and 5 rocket-launcher regiments.

Furthermore, 30% of the 120 mm and 82 mm mortars of the rifle regiments of the first echelon were to participate. This amounted to four 120 mm mortar batteries and twelve 82 mm mortar companies.

The overall number of artillery pieces and mortars is given below in Table 2.

Guns and mortars		Number	Front of counter preparation	Average density per 1 km of front			Greatest density per 1 km of front
				guns	mortars	Total	
<u>Guns</u>							
76 mm divisional							
guns		220	-	-	-	-	-
122 mm howitzers		207	-	-	-	-	-
122 mm guns		39	-	-	-	-	-
152 mm gun-hows.		41	-	-	-	-	-
Total		507	-	-	-	-	-
<u>Mortars</u>							
120 mm		321					
82 mm		139					
Total		460					
Grand Total		967	32km	15.8	14.4	30.2	up to 60 guns and mortars.

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On the basis of all the information gained by reconnaissance the following targets for suppression by the counterpreparation were established: 104 mortar and artillery batteries; 59 observation points; 58 likely infantry and tank concentration areas.

After the army staff had completed the plan for the counterpreparation, the artillery staffs and troops were given the necessary instructions. The artillery staffs of the rifle divisions and the staff of the 4th. Artillery Corps were to make the changes made necessary as the result of any new information, which had been gathered about the enemy, that is, to exchange targets which had become redundant and add new ones which had been discovered.

Systematic verification by the officers of the army artillery staff, corrections and supplements to the plan conforming to the changed situation kept the artillery in constant readiness to conduct the counterpreparation.

The counterpreparation was to last for 30 minutes and 0.25 units of fire were to be used in the following order:

- first concentration to last 5 minutes - by all artillery and mortars assigned to the counterpreparation on enemy batteries and observation points.

- 20 minutes of deliberate fire by one half of the same artillery and on the same targets.

- the second five-minute concentration by all the artillery on the same targets.

Fire on the likely groupings of infantry and tanks were called for by supplementary signals in the event that reconnaissance revealed these in areas provided for in the plan.

Conforming to the directive by the Artillery Commander of the Central Front, the army artillery staff planning the operation paid special attention to the suppression of enemy artillery in preparing its plan for the counterpreparation.

By the beginning of July the 13th. Army's plan for the counterpreparation was well worked out not only by the army artillery but

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also in the units and subunits. The targets for the counterpreparation were analysed daily and corrected in order to maintain a realistic plan.

An accurate estimate of the timing for the counterpreparation in relation to the enemy's general plan was made possible by the 2nd. of July based on information received by all types of reconnaissance and from statements made by prisoners and deserters.

Conforming to the order given by the Front Commander, the army artillery started the counterpreparation at 0220 hours on the 5th. of July.

Due to the disorganization caused by our fire, serious losses had been inflicted on the enemy, but he was under direct orders from Hitler to attack, although he was not able to start his artillery preparation until 0430 hours. This lasted for one hour and twenty minutes but was rather disorganized and dispersed. Thus, for example, during the first few minutes the disorganized enemy fire did not reach our artillery at all. This circumstance made it possible for the Army Artillery Commander to repeat the counter artillery preparation. Thus at 0435 hours the original counterpreparation was repeated on the same targets and with the same expenditure of ammunition.

A total of 0.50 units of fire of all types of ammunition were spent in both counterpreparations.

During the counterpreparation up to 90 enemy batteries, 60 observation points were crushed and 6 ammunition and fuel dumps were destroyed.

Enemy infantry and tanks started to leave their concentration areas quickly and to disperse. Over two battalions of enemy infantry were destroyed during the dispersal.

Conclusions. 1. During the counterpreparation on the Central Front the greater portion of artillery fire was concentrated on the crushing of enemy artillery batteries, which, in the main, were crushed. This had an important effect on the outcome of the operation.

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The enemy, having been deprived of powerful artillery support and ~~not~~ meeting the full impact of defensive fire by our artillery and infantry, was unable to achieve success.

2; Massed artillery fire, directed in the main against enemy artillery, the realistic assessment of the data available prior to the counterpreparation (the lengthy assembly by the enemy, the unloading of supplies, the early deployment of the enemy artillery, which gave our reconnaissance the capability to pinpoint the enemy artillery positions early), still does not permit one to draw the conclusion that the main objects of the artillery fire of a counterpreparation should be enemy artillery positions.

3. The entire weight of the artillery, in the period of the counterpreparation is concentrated on the crushing of enemy artillery, but one can not count on disrupting the attack.

An attack can only be crushed by a simultaneous strike of all available weapons on the departure positions of infantry and tanks, signal centers, observation posts and artillery fire positions.

Voronezh Front. The planning for the counterpreparation was started when the troops assumed the defensive.

From the information gathered by reconnaissance one could draw the conclusion that the enemy would most likely attack on the front of the 6th. and 7th/ Guards Armies in the direction of Obayan-Kursk.

The Commander of the Front assigned the task of crushing the attack, by a counterpreparation, to the artillery of the 6th. and 7th. Army.

6th. Guards Army. Available for the counterpreparation were four divisional artillery regiments, two gun artillery brigades, one army artillery regiment, two mortar regiments, four rocket launcher regiments, regimental artillery as well as the 120mm and 82 mm mortars of the rifle regiments of the first echelon rifle divisions.

In order not to disclose the system of the anti-tank defence, the artillery in the anti-tank sectors (the tank destroyer artillery

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and the anti-tank reserves) was not included in the counterpreparation.

The total number of artillery pieces and mortars assigned to the counterpreparation and their density is shown in Table 3.

Guns and mortars	Number	Average density per 1 km of front			
		Guns	Mortars	Rocket Launchers	Total
		(less 45 mm)			
Guns					
45 mm guns	36	-	-	-	-
76 mm regimental guns	224	-	-	-	-
76 mm divisional guns	76	-	-	-	-
122 mm guns ⁸ / ₈ hws.	61	-	-	-	-
152 mm guns ⁸ / ₈ hws.	47	-	-	-	-
Total	244	-	-	-	-
Mortars.					
120 mm	117	-	-	-	-
82 mm	230	-	-	-	-
Total	347	-	-	-	-
Rocket launchers	95	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	686	11.5	19.0	53	35.8

The essential feature of the plan was that the massed fire of the artillery mortars and rocket launchers was to crush personnel and to inflict heavy casualties on the tanks in their departure positions.

Starting with the 28th. of June, data gathered by all types of reconnaissance (as described previously) made it possible to assess accurately the character of the awaited attack, its grouping and timing, as a result of which the exact timing of the counterpreparation could be determined.

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At 1600 hours on the 4th. of July, the enemy after a short artillery preparation dislodged our battle outposts and by the end of the day had moved up close to our forward defence line.

All the data collected by reconnaissance and enemy activity indicated that the enemy was planning to start an attack on the morning of the 5th. of July. In view of this development the decision was taken to fire a five-minute concentration at 2230 hours on the 4th. of July against the following targets: 17 infantry and tank concentration areas, 12 artillery battery locations, 17 observation points and other targets.

On the 5th. of July at 0300 hours the counterpreparation was continued by a five-minute concentration on the infantry and tank assembly areas. Prior to that, after the first five-minute concentration, 15 minutes of directed fire had been directed at the same targets.

The counterpreparation was finished with a ten-minute concentration on the assembly areas of tanks and infantry and partially against enemy artillery positions.

Infantry, rifle, and machine gun fire was also used in the counterpreparation by the 6th. Guards Army as well as the fire of tanks on infantry departure positions.

0.5 units of fire were used by all weapons used in the counterpreparation.

7th. Guards Army. Assigned to the counterpreparation were seven divisional artillery regiments, three gun regiments of the GH reserve, one mortar regiment, two rocket launcher regiments, regimental artillery and the 120 mm and 82 mm mortars of the rifle regiments of the first echelon rifle divisions.

The artillery stationed in the anti-tank sectors, the tank destroyer artillery regiments and the anti-tank artillery of the reserve did not participate in the counterpreparation.

The grouping of the enemy artillery offered several possible

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plans for a counterpreparation.

On the line of direction of the enemy attack, taking into account the fire of the artillery from the neighboring sectors, the average density of guns and mortars varied from 26.3 to 68.6 per 1 km of front. The greatest density occurred in the sector Mikaylovsk which was the enemy bridgehead on the eastern shore of the river Northern Donetz - 68.6 guns and mortars, in addition to 16 rocket launchers.

The plan of the counterpreparation provided primarily for the destruction of enemy personnel in their departure positions and only envisaged partial suppression of his artillery.

The accepted decision for the counterpreparation was based on the following enemy action. During June enemy aircraft was concentrated on the reconnaissance of our defences and the bombarding of our artillery in the central sector and on the right flank of our army. From the 1st. to the 5th. of July the enemy conducted battle reconnaissance by groups of company and battalion size.

In the period from the 1st. to the 5th/ of July the following evidence accumulated that the enemy was preparing for an attack:

- regrouping of the enemy opposite our right flank and the partial introduction of units of the second echelon.
- increased transport of ammunition to the enemy's front, as well as personnel and other equipment (during four days about 3000 vehicles approached the front line).
- increased activity of enemy artillery and mortar fire from the 1st. of July opposite the right flank, the number of rounds fired increased from 700 to 3200 in twenty-four hours.
- the movement of columns of vehicles to the front during the night.
- the relocation of airfields and command posts closer to the front line.
- The concentration of about three tank divisions in the area south-west of Belgorod.

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All the data quoted above as well as other information pointed to the fact that the enemy would assume the offensive on the morning of the 5th. of July. As a result the decision to proceed with a counterpreparation was taken.

The counterpreparation was started at 0300 hours on the 5th. of July and proceeded according to the plan which provided for the first concentration of fire of five minutes, directed fire of 15 minutes, and a second concentration of 10 minutes.

One half a unit of fire, of all types of ammunition, was used up in the counterpreparation.

Interrogation of prisoners established that the enemy had suffered heavy losses as a result of the counterpreparation on the front of the 5th. and 7th. Guards armies, particularly in the SS units. Thus a prisoner of the 167th. Infantry Regiment, of the 332 Infantry Division, stated that his regiment lost over 600 soldiers and officers and about 25% of its equipment during the counterpreparation.

From the captured report of the commander of the 19th. German Tank Division, Lieutenant-General Schmidt, it was disclosed that the attack by the division in the area of Mikoylovka was disrupted by the counterpreparation and that the 19th. German Tank Division suffered serious losses in personnel. This is what he wrote: "The Russians opened fire with many weapons, which bore witness to the large enemy concentration of artillery. The rocket launcher regiments, operating opposite the division, kept all ravines under fire. It was impossible to continue work and to bring up the bridges for the "Tigers". In 10 minutes the Russians had destroyed our departure positions."

Conclusions.

1. As the result of the counterpreparation the enemy cancelled the attack from his prepared bridgehead on the eastern shore of the river Northern Donetz in the area of Mikaylovka.

The fire of our artillery and mortars inflicted heavy losses

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on the SS troops prior to the start of the attack, which was confirmed by prisoners.

The counterpreparation destroyed the moral strength of the enemy and his potential to fight was seriously reduced.

2. As the result of the massed artillery concentrations on the enemy observation posts his artillery was able to conduct only disorganized fire during the period of our artillery preparation.

3. The concentration fired by the 6th. Guards Army at 2230 hours on the 4th. of July appraised the enemy of our preparedness and took away the surprise from our second concentration which started at 0300 hours on the 5th. of July, 1943.

4. Attention is drawn to the support given to the counterpreparation by the rifle and machine gun fire of the infantry and particularly the fire of the tank units assigned to the counterpreparation of the 6th. Guards Army.

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APPENDIX L. (left half)

"Approved"

Commander of Army N - Member of Military Council.

Plan of Counterpreparation of Army N in the area

right - Marchenka, Laskino) version "Star"
 left - Gusev, Il'ichevka)

1. Name of formation and unit	Concentration 5 minutes	Air Strike 10 minutes	Concentration 5 minutes
2. Airforce 25th. Air Bomber Regiment	-	Bomber attack on enemy artillery positions in the area: rigi, ocha, Fetukhi	-
3. 29th. Air Bomber Regiment	-	Bombing of enemy tanks and artillery in the area: azakovtsy, Shvarevo, height 220.5	-
4. 27th. Ground Attack Air Regiment	-	-	-
5. Artillery and mortars of the 24th. Rifle Corps	Concentration of rifle and fire and of artillery of 1st and 2nd Rifle Divisions on enemy infantry and tank positions on heights 238.2; 239.3; 240.5; 227.2; 223.3; 225.6.	-	Concentration by the mortars and artillery of the 1st. and 2nd. Rifle Divisions on the enemy departure positions on heights 238.2; 239.3; 240.5; 227.2; 227.3; 225.6
7th. mortar Brigade	On heights 227.2; 223.3; 225.6; and on the reverse slopes of these heights.	-	On heights 227.2 and 223.3 and on their reverse slopes.
6. 19th. Artillery Division and the 1st. mortar Brigade.	Concentration on the departure positions of infantry and tanks in the area Gusev, rigi, ocha, Fetukhi, G'rabari	-	Concentration on infantry and tank departure positions in the area Gusev, rigi, ocha, Fetukhi, G'rabari.
3rd. Howitzer Brigade	Suppression tasks assigned by the Army Artillery Command	-	Suppression tasks assigned by the Army Artillery Command.
4th. Gun Brigade			
5th. Gun Brigade			

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APPENDIX 1 (right half)

1. Destruction of Op's Concentration
by direct fire weapons

5 minutes

5 minutes

2.

3.

4. Ground attack on
enemy tanks and
artillery in the
area Kazakovtsi,
Shvarevo, Height 220.5.

5. Concentration by rifle and
MG fire of the 1st. and 2nd.
Rifle Divisions on the de-
parture positions opposite
their front.

Group of direct fire weapons
destroy enemy observation
points on height 238.2; 239.3;
240.5; 227.2; 223.3; 225.6.

Concentration by rifle, MG, and
mortars on the departure positions
of infantry in the areas heights
238.2; 239.3; 240.5; 227.2; 223.3;
225.6.

Concentration by the artillery on
the tank departure positions in
the areas Rigi, Tetukhi, Kocha
and Grabari.

6. Concentration by the 3rd. How-
itzer and the 4th. and 5th. Gun
Artillery Brigades on enemy batt-
eries in the area Kocha, Rigi,
Tetukhi.

Concentration on infantry and
tank departure positions in the
area G'usevo, Rigi, Kocha, Tet-
ukhi, G'rabari.

At the disposal of the Army
Artillery Commander.

Suppression tasks assigned by the
Army Artillery Commander.

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- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|
| 7. Group of Army Rocket Launchers | Concentration on infantry departure positions by one regiment on heights 227.2; 223.3; 225.6. | - | - |
| 1st. Rocket Launcher Regiment. | | | |
| 2nd. Rocket Launcher Regiment. | | | |
| 3rd. Rocket Launcher Regiment. | Concentration by these regiments on heights 240.5; 239.3; 238.2. | - | - |
| 4th. Rocket Launcher Regiment. | Suppression targets assigned by the Army Artillery Commander. | | |
-
- | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| 8. 20 Machine Gun Artillery Regiment. | Concentration on enemy batteries in the area 1.5 km north of Petrovo, at the disposal of the Army Artillery Commander. | - | Directed fire against enemy batteries in the area 1.5 km north of Petrovo. |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|--|
-
- | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| 9. Artillery of the 8th. Rifle Division and the 4th. Regiment of the Reserve. | Concentration on infantry and tank departure positions in the area of heights 225.6; 229.6; 230.2. | - | Concentration on infantry and tank departure positions in the area of height 225.6; 229.6; 230.2. |
|---|--|---|---|
-
- | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| 10. Artillery of the 300th. Rifle Division | Concentration on infantry and tank departure positions in the area north-east of Gusev, height 238.2, right. | - | Concentration on infantry and tank departure positions in the area north-east of Gusev, height 238.2, right. |
| 10th. Gun Artillery Regiment | | | |
| 5th. Rocket Launcher Regiment. | | | |

Signals:

1. "Prepare for counterpreparation" - telephone - codeword "Shchuka" - Radio 200.
2. "Ready for counterpreparation" - by telephone "Molinya" - Radio 300.
3. "Start firing the counterpreparation" - by telephone "Zhuk" - Radio 400.
4. "Counterpreparation completed" - by telephone "Grusha" - Radio 500.

Chief of Staff, Army "N" - (signature)

Chief of Operations Section - (signature).

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Right half.

7. - Concentration by one regiment on infantry departure positions in the areas of heights 240.5, 239.3, 238.2.
Suppression targets assigned by the Army Artillery Commander.
-
8. Concentration against enemy/Directed fire against enemy batteries in the area 1.5 km/nest in the area 1.5 km north of north of Petrovo.
Petrovo as directed by the Army Artillery Commander.
-
9. - Concentration on infantry and tank departure positions in the areas of heights 225.6, 229.6, 230.2.
-
10. - Concentration on infantry and tank departure positions in the areas north-east of G'usev, height 238.2, right.
-